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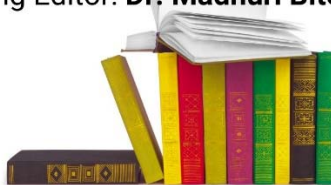
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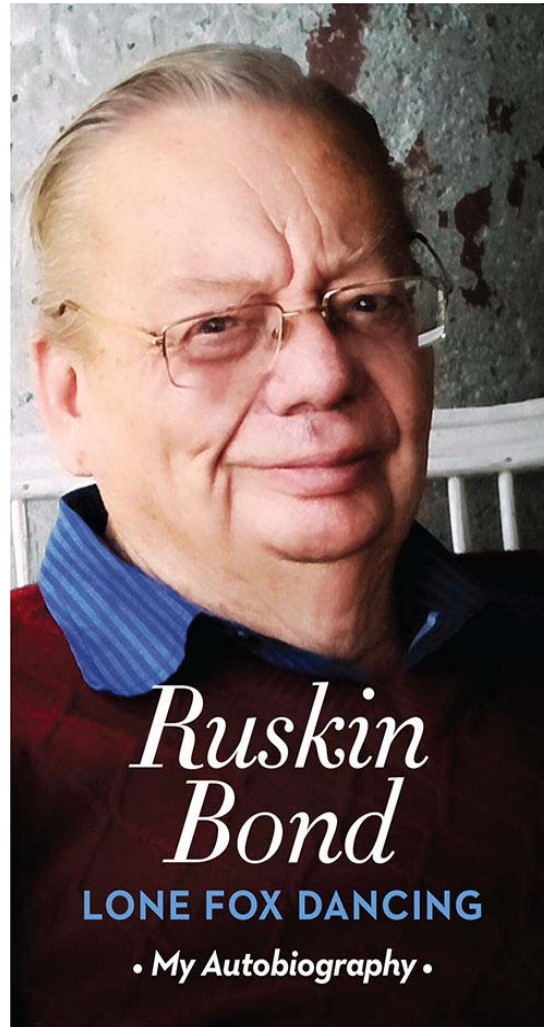
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Book: Lone Fox Dancing- My Autobiography

Author: Ruskin Bond

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About the author:

Indian author Ruskin Bond is of British ancestry. As a leading novelist, he is revered by Indian writers and children's book authors. *The Room on the Roof*, his debut book written at the age of seventeen awarded him with the Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957. More than 500 short stories, numerous articles, poems, and a number of novellas have been written by him since then, making him one of the most beloved and respected chroniclers of modern-day India. His collection of short stories, "Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra," won him the 1992 Sahitya Akademi award for English writing. He received the Padma Shri award in 1999 and Padma Bhushan in 2014 for his contribution to children's literature. He now lives with his adopted family in Landour near Mussoorie.

For readers of all ages, in large cities, little towns, and tiny hamlets, Ruskin Bond has been the ideal companion for more than sixty years. Through his books and stories, he has delighted, enchanted, and occasionally frightened us while also enlightening us to the beauty of the natural world and ordinary existence.

About the book:

Ruskin Bond's autobiography 'Lone Fox Dancing' is a delightful read for readers of all ages. Featuring more than fifty images, it is a book of quiet and enduring beauty, much like Ruskin Bond himself. Full of anecdotes, warmth, and gentle wit; it is extremely moving and has a great sense of time and place.

A captivating account of author's life it truly defies all social norms regarding marriage, family, love, and national boundaries.

After a brief break in England, the book takes us through the wide beaches of the princely kingdoms of Jamnagar, Delhi in the 1950s and 1960s, and finally the hills of Mussoorie, which have stayed the same despite the nation's constantly shifting geography. Bond, who is 83 years

old, has witnessed India's growth from before independence to the present. He has highlighted the differences between the Delhi of his youth and the Delhi of today.

Each of the four sections of this book is focused on a different stage of Ruskin Bond's life, ranging from boyhood to adulthood to his most recent years. Its 277 pages are filled with old black and white pictures that are nicely punctuated and language that is frugal.

1) **The lone fox, Bond**

His childhood in India, his parents' tense relationship, his mother's extramarital affair, the eventual split of his parents, his mother's second marriage, his father's illness and premature death, and the author's role as a lone child victim are all covered in the first section of Lone Fox Dancing. His time in Shimla and the friendships he made while attending boarding school provide the only solace from these challenges.

He says about his life, 'As a boy- loneliness, as a man –solitude....The loneliness was not of my seeking. The solitude I sought and found.'

2) The most admirable aspect of Lone Fox Dancing's story is how it defies the conventional understanding of "family", which is particularly relevant in India. For example, Bond describes how he felt more at ease with the ex-wife of his stepfather than with his own mother.

He also wants to spend the rest of his life with Rakesh and Beena, his foster family.

He has shattered the rigid notion of a family; everyone can be a family if they so choose.

He genuinely upholds the Indian principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," that states, "the entire world is our family." He thus challenges conventional marriage as well.

Does a marriage tie require love or cultural resemblance? He explains to us his own unsuccessful relationships in which reason prevailed over emotion. He talks as openly about the idea of choosing your own family and friendship—a bond that transcends boundaries, caste, community, race, and religion—as he does about shattered families.

His failure to understand the hatred for Pakistani Muslims during the India-Pakistan War is another heart breaking event for him, and the portrayal of his friends—particularly those from Pakistan—is heart-warming.

- 3) The peculiar title of the book is drawn from a lone fox he saw dancing in Mussoorie and which he describes through a small poem:

As I walked home last night

I saw a lone fox dancing

In the bright moonlight

I stood and watched.

Then took the low road, knowing

The night was his by right.

Sometimes, when words ring true,

I am like a lone fox dancing

In the morning dew.

Indeed, he had a solitary existence giving life to several fictional characters. The way he explains it, time in the hills goes by at its own pleasant pace: the seasons come and go in a comfortingly predictable way, the chestnuts and walnuts ripen and fall, and we ripen too, in our own way, becoming older and not much wiser but still somehow making it through.

4) **Boundaries: Actual and imaginary**

Through his constantly shifting identity—he was born to British parents but raised in India—Ruskin Bond poses a highly relevant question about nation and nationalism. In a particularly moving scene, he recounts an experience from Puri, Odhisa, where he and his foster family visited a temple dedicated to Lord Jagannath. Bond was halted because of the colour of his skin, while his family was permitted to enter. Who is Indian? Does a person's skin colour alone qualify them as an Indian?

The hook: “Being Indian and feeling Indian has little to do with one’s place of birth or one’s religion.

Conclusion:

Ruskin Bond's relationship with nature is not new and readers are consistently delighted by his evocative depictions of the natural world, particularly the hills and the trees. *Lone Fox Dancing* is a crucial book for our times since it expands on the writer’s personal life leaving us to ponder over our terms of existence while also challenging many ideas about what it means to be a human.

Although it does not provide us with much information about his life, it is nevertheless worth reading because it presents him as a man who dislikes fitting in.